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## Turner Mausoleum

Although many of the mausoleums within Woodlawn Cemetery have temple fronts, inspired by classical Greek architecture, the Turner mausoleum is unusual in its Gothic style. The design of the building is divided into two parts, making the front façade lack symmetry: on the taller north side is the entrance with stained-glass windows and arches, while on the squatter south side are the inaccessible catacombs. The mausoleum is constructed from rough, gray granite and is supported by buttresses on every side. In contrast to the gray, rough granite walls, the inside is almost entirely white, smooth marble at the floor and a ceiling covered in white, gold, and green mosaic tiles creating ornate patterns. The Gothic structure is 19 feet tall, 22 feet wide, and 18 feet deep. It houses nine people, though it can hold a total of fourteen. The doors leading inside are made of bronze and have patinaed with age. Carved into the granite on the exterior of the building, on the right buttress next to the door is the date in which the mausoleum was constructed, 1897. (See Figures 1-2)

In 1897 the wife of John Spencer Turner, Cornelia Jane Eddy died. That year John Spencer Turner commissioned the building of a mausoleum to hold her. In 1905 John Spencer Turner joined his wife in death and his body was placed next to hers in the Turner mausoleum.<sup>1</sup> The Turners had three children, first a daughter born 1852, who sadly died an infant in 1853. Next a son: Thomas Morgan Turner, born 1856, who married Emily Barnes Turner. Finally, a daughter: Sue Isabel Turner, born 1862. Sue first married Walter Shields and had two children with him: Sue Turner Shields and George Turner Shields. Sadly, both children died very young. Sue only lived from 1878 until 1885, she was six years

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<sup>1</sup> "Obituary: John Spencer Turner" *New-York Tribune (1900-1910)*. 20 Sept. 1905, pg.7. See also, "John Spencer Turner Dead: Officer of Cotton Duck Corporation Stricken with Apoplexy" *New York Times*, 20 Sept. 1905, pg. 9.

old.<sup>2</sup> George lived from 1884 until 1893, when he was 8 years old.<sup>3</sup> After the death of her husband and children, Sue Isabel Turner married Robert Lloyd Parker and moved to Liverpool, England. Sue died in 1920 and now rests with her children in the Turner mausoleum.<sup>4</sup> Thomas Morgan Turner, with Emily Barnes, had a son in 1884 and named him Spencer Turner. Spencer married Marjorie Slurges Turner, born 1891, and had two daughters.

Of those in the Turner Family, six members can be found within the walls of the Turner mausoleum: John Spencer Turner and his wife Cornelia Jane Eddy, Thomas Morgan Turner, Spencer Turner, Marjorie Slurges Turner, Sue Isabel Turner, and lastly George Turner Shields. On the walls are memorial plaques for Mary Morgan Turner, who is buried in Rosehill Cemetery Chicago, and Sue Turner Shields, buried in Greenwood. There are two others buried in the Turner mausoleum: John Sturgies Turner (died 1962), who is believed to be a descendant of the Turner family, and Gertrude S. Ryan (died 1939) whose lineage is unknown.

The Turner family was clearly religious, in fact, it was recorded in the *New York Times* that only a few years prior to his death John Spencer Turner “received the title of Marquis from the Pope in recognition of his philanthropic generosity,” though it does not specify what he did to earn the title.<sup>5</sup> Within the newspaper obituaries it was mentioned that John Spencer Turner might have also had a second son, named John Spencer Turner Jr. who was an Episcopal clergyman in Brooklyn and later moved to Rome. Although this was not confirmed, it would draw even greater connections to the Catholic church.

The Family Business:

The money needed to create the elaborate Turner mausoleum came from the manufacturing of cotton products: cotton duck and heavy cotton fabrics. The company that became J. Spencer Turner

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<sup>2</sup> “Obituary 1: No Title” *New York Times* (1857-1922). 17 May. 1885, pg. 9.

<sup>3</sup> “Obituary 1: No Title” *New York Times* (1857-1922). 29 Mar. 1893, pg. 5.

<sup>4</sup> “Obituary 2: No Title” *New York Times* (1857-1922). 17 Jun. 1920, pg. 11.

<sup>5</sup> “Papal Title for J.S. Turner: New Yorker is Created a Marquis in Recognition of His Philanthropic Generosity” *New York Times*. 11 Jul. 1902, pg. 6.

Company began in 1807 as Theodore Polhemus and Co. specializing as dry-goods commission merchants.<sup>6</sup> In 1873 John Spencer Turner moved from Chicago to New York City and, having knowledge and experience in the dry-goods business, joined a Mr. Brinckerhoff and took over the company, renaming it Brinckerhoff Turner & Co. Later the company became J. Spencer Turner Company.<sup>7</sup> By 1903 the company had grown to become one of the leading houses in the dry-goods world and had several branches across the United States and world including: Chicago, Philadelphia, St Louis, London, Manchester England, and Canada.<sup>8</sup> John Spencer Turner was the president and his son, Thomas Morgan, was vice president of the company. *The New York Tribune* in 1903 stated that “the company principally handle domestic manufactures of cotton goods and are the sole selling agents for the United States Cotton Duck Corporation for Export.”<sup>9</sup> The J. Spencer Turner Company created textiles, yarn fabrics, etc. After the Death of J. S. Turner in 1905, the cotton duck company was handed down to Thomas Morgan Turner.<sup>10</sup> A few years later in 1908 the company was renamed Spencer Halsey Company.<sup>11</sup> Thomas Morgan Turner died in 1915 and in 1916 Spencer Turner, the son of Thomas, became vice president, then president.<sup>12</sup>

The Turner mausoleum is truly a work of art, resembling that of a Gothic church, and has many symbolic elements within its walls reflecting the obvious ties the Turner family had with the Catholic church. Dogwood flowers, symbolizing rebirth, are placed around the bronze door, carved into the granite stone above the door, are placed in bronze around the edges of the marble catacombs, and pictured in the stained-glass windows.

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<sup>6</sup> Walton, Frank L. *Tomahawks to Textiles: The Fabulous Story of Worth Street*. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. New York, NY. 1953. Pg. 148-149.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “J. Spencer Turner Company” *New-York Tribune*: 29 Mar. 1903, pg. B9.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Walton, Frank L. *Tomahawks to Textiles: The Fabulous Story of Worth Street*. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. New York, NY. 1953. Pg. 148-149.

<sup>12</sup> “Spencer Turner Dies After Long Illness at 44; President of Cotton Textile Merchants’ Association a Yale Graduate of 1906” *New York Herald Tribune*. 19 Oct. 1928, pg. 23. See also, “Obituary 1; No Title” *New York Times (1857-1922)*. 11 Jan. 1915, pg. 9.

There are five stained-glass windows, four on the north wall and one on the East. Within the four north wall windows are “instruments of the passion,” symbols of the Catholic faith and the death of Jesus Christ: a white robe and dice (representing when soldiers gambled for Jesus’s clothes), a lantern and swords, hammer, pinchers, ladder and nails, a rooster, reed, and lance.<sup>13</sup> These symbols are enclosed in a shield and framed with dogwood flowers. (See Figures 3).

The large stained-glass window in the rear depicts Mary and a woman grieving over her lap as her dead child lays on the ground. The image originates from a painting by William-Adolphe Bouguereau: “Vierge Consolatrice.” Bouguereau painted this image after the death of his wife and seven-month-old son.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, John Spencer Turner and Cordelia lost an eight-month-old daughter, and John and Cordelia’s daughter, Sue, lost her two children. It appears obvious that the stained glass was to honor both John Spencer Turner’s late wife and his daughter (See Figure 4).

On each side of the stained glass is a roman numeral, on the left: alpha (beginning), and on the right side: omega (end). Underneath the rear stained glass is a marble alter (See Figure 2). On the ceiling hangs a bronze lamp with blue shields and images of a lion, the symbol of Saint Mark (See Figure 5). The mosaic ceiling is ornately decorated with gold leaf stars, framed in a woven detail. The walls, floor and windows are outlined in gold and green mosaic patterns. The windows within the bronze door outline the shape of a cross and there is a large stone cross that sits atop the parapet of the mausoleum (See Figures 1-3).

Although great care was taken involving the decoration and design of the Turner mausoleum, it was found in Woodlawn Cemetery reports that the structure was built incorrectly. In a letter from Woodlawn dating to 1935, it was relayed that because of the incorrect construction, in 1928 one or more of the art glass windows received repair with reinforcing bars and in 1935 the nine vents in the outside walls had to

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<sup>13</sup> “Crucifix with Instruments of the Passion,” Crucifix with Instruments of the Passion: University of Dayton, Ohio. Accessed October 10, 2022. <https://udayton.edu/blogs/marianlibrary/2019-04-19-crucifix-with-instruments-of-the-passion.php>.

<sup>14</sup> Marshall, Dr Taylor. “What’s Your Favorite Piece of Religious Art? Vierge Consolatrice by William-Adolphe Bouguereau.” Taylor Marshall, August 13, 2014. <https://taylormarshall.com/2014/08/vierge-consolatrice-favorite-religious-art.html>.

be replaced. From Woodlawn letters it has been learned that over time exterior joints have required repair and have been filled with Portland cement. In the final letter from Woodlawn, Mr. John Sturgis Turner was sent a letter in 1955 informing him that the "joints in the balance of the building are now need of repointing" and that this work would cost \$1056.<sup>15</sup> It is unknown whether John Sturgis Turner ever responded or if the work was ever completed.

Currently the ceiling and walls are scarred with cracks caused from what appears to be water that has leaked in from the roof over time (See Figure 6-7). Even on the roof, there is a small tree that has begun to grow. Traditionally, mausoleum foundations extend three feet below ground; however, the steep slope that descends at the rear of the mausoleum questions the stability of the structure and may be the cause of the interior cracking as well. At the base of the steps there are holes that stretch nine inches in diameter, that might have been the result of settling over time. A cherry tree grows in the rear right corner of the Turner property. The roots from the tree could be disrupting the stability of the foundation.

The Turner mausoleum is a work of art but is falling into disrepair due possibly to water leaks and foundation issues that have been created over time through settling. The last documentation between the Woodlawn Cemetery and the Turner family was in 1955 and it is unlikely that the Turner mausoleum is receiving any funds for repair or upkeep. The exterior Gothic style and interior decorative mosaics are atypical to the Woodlawn Cemetery. With the documentation that has been very recently carefully completed of the site, there is some hope that these problems can be resolved, and the Turner mausoleum return to its former beauty (See Figures 7-11).

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<sup>15</sup> "Turner Mausoleum." Woodlawn Cemetery Correspondence Archives, Avery Library, Columbia University, New York, NY.

## Bibliography:

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Figures:



Figure 1: Exterior Front Façade

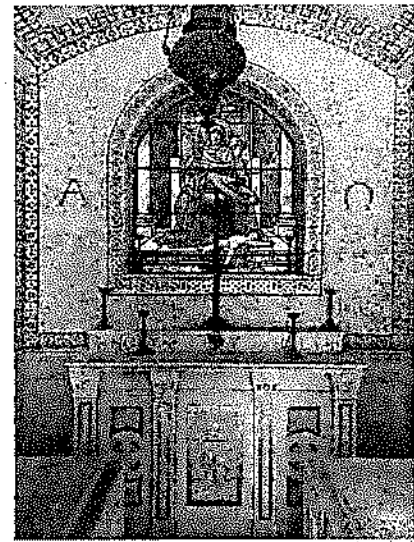


Figure 2: Interior

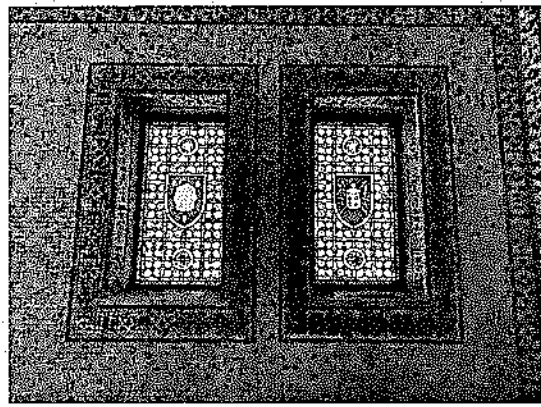
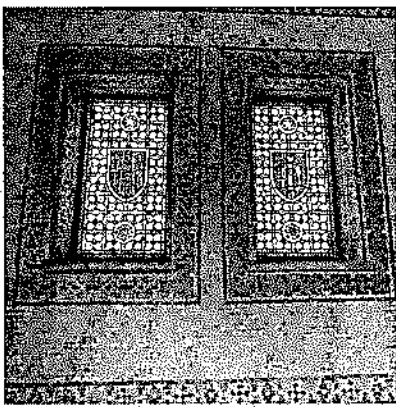


Figure 3: Left Wall Windows (Instruments of the Passion)



Figure 4: William-Adolphe Bouguereau: Vierge Consolatrice

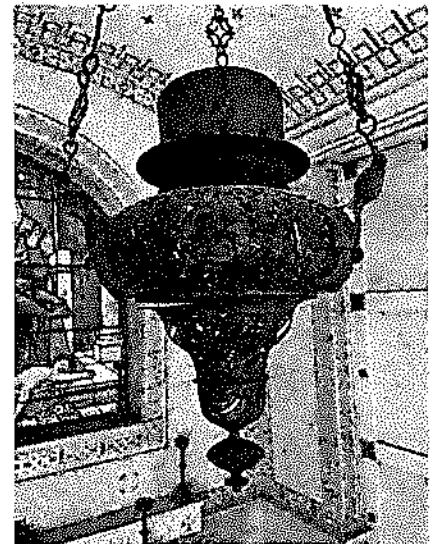


Figure 5: Hanging Lamp

Figures:



Figure 6: Front Door With Cracks

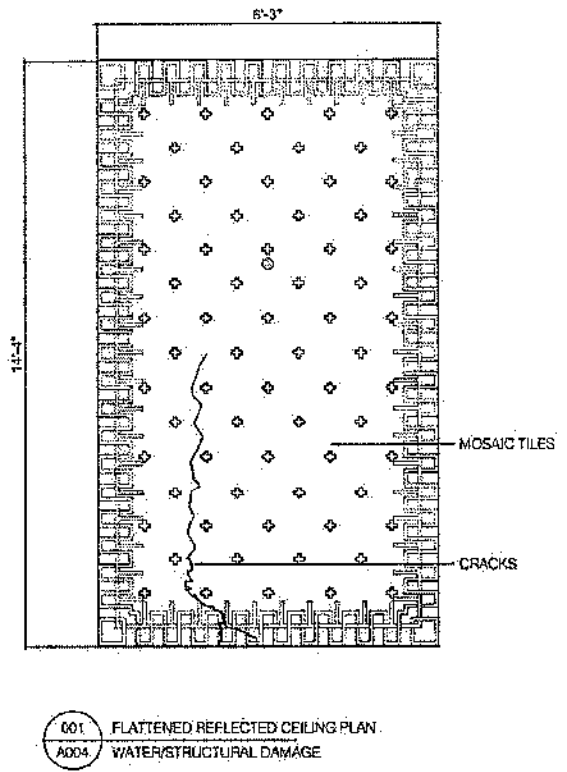


Figure 7: Flattened Reflected Ceiling Plan

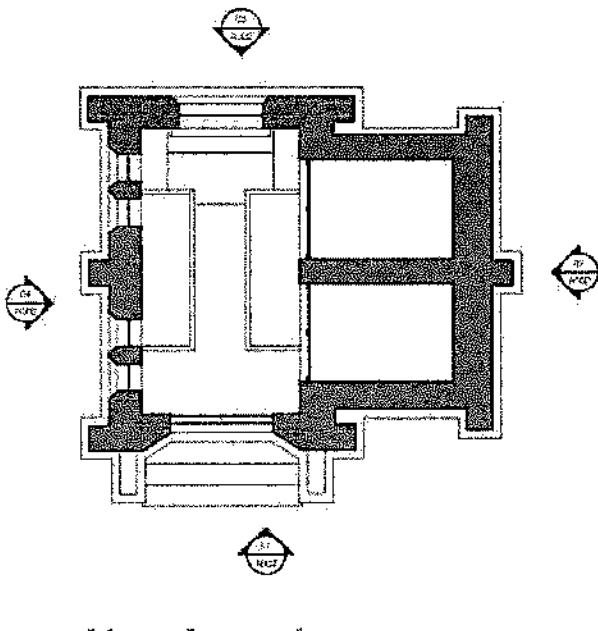


Figure 8: Floor Plan

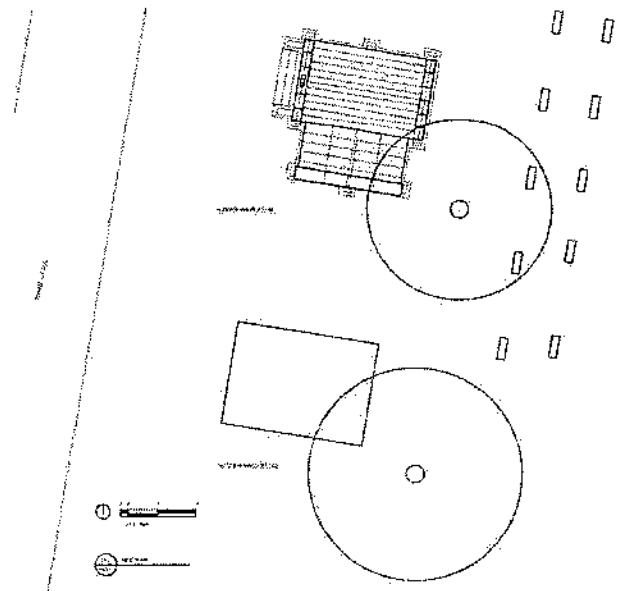


Figure 9: Site Plan



Figures:

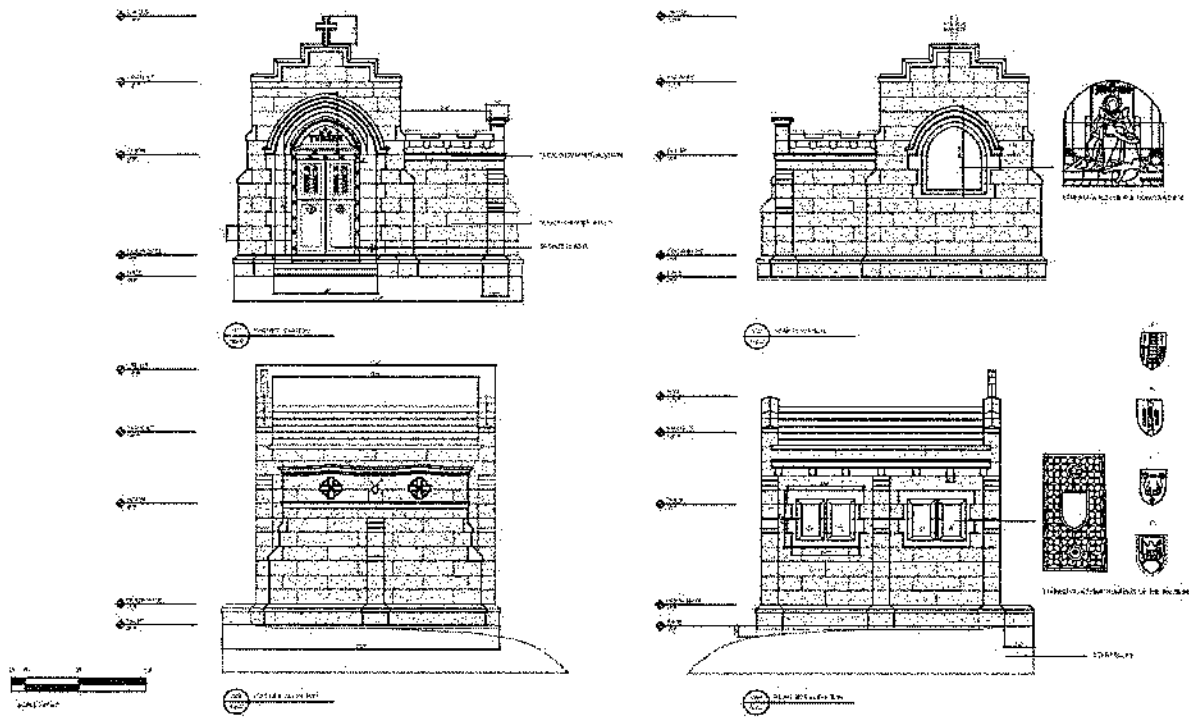


Figure 10: Elevations

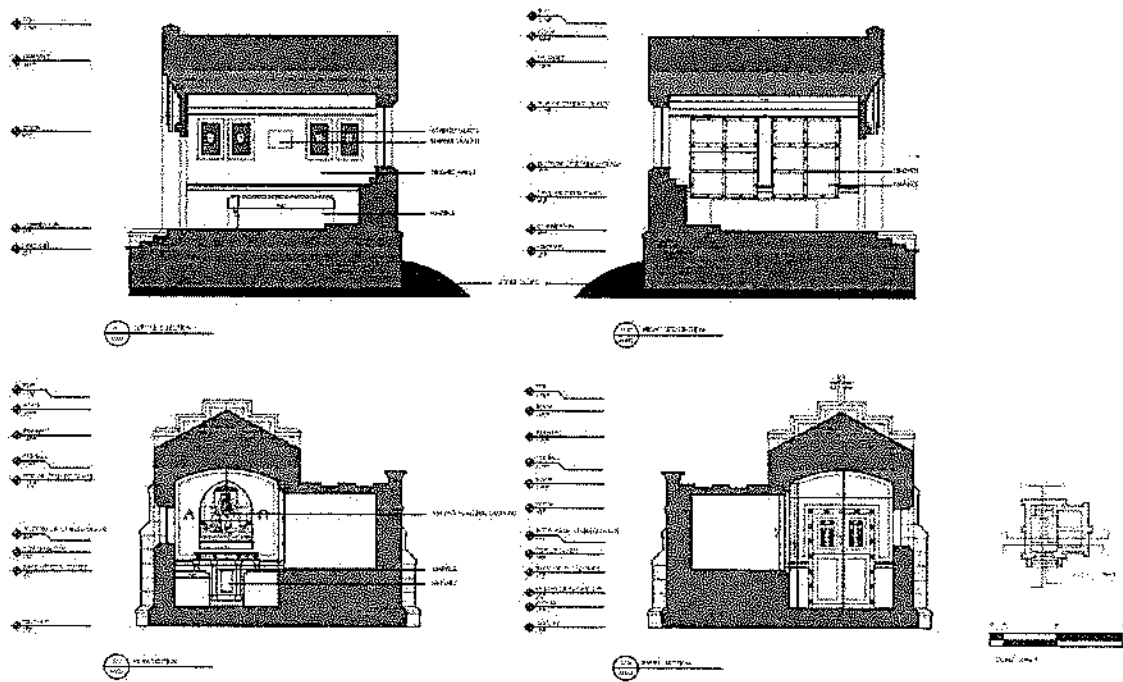


Figure 11: Sections