

**The Mausoleum
of
Anton Tiberius Kliegl**

Woodlawn Cemetery
Bronx, N.Y.



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Project #3: Preservation Studio
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October 18, 2010

Anton Kliegl died at only 55 years of age in New York City. As the wife of a very successful German immigrant, Leopoldine Kliegl had to decide how to deal with his remains. With the help of Presbrey-Leland Studios and Woodlawn Cemetery, she chose to memorialize his life with a mausoleum placed in Woodlawn Cemetery in Bronx, NY. In this paper, we will examine the choices that she made in that process: design, materials, siting, landscaping and symbolism. Her selections in memorializing her husband left us, eighty-three years later, with a mausoleum that is distinct from the others around it in the cemetery. Perhaps Mrs. Kliegl was portraying her husband's personality in stone: relatively modest in design and scale, but still unique, interesting and prominent.

Anton Kliegl and his older brother, John, immigrated to the United States in 1893¹; in New York City they worked for an electric arc lamp factory. They saved their money and by 1896, they bought the factory from their boss. They launched the Kliegl Brothers Universal Electric Stage Lighting Company quickly, both designing and selling lighting equipment to stage and movie sets. In 1911, they developed the Kliegl light, now called the Klieg light, and it changed the film industry. With the Klieg light, night could become day, and movie making could continue at all hours. Their Klieg light was used in both *Ben Hur* and *The Wizard of Oz*.²

When Anton Kliegl died at the young age of 55 (his brother lived to 90 yrs.), his childless wife had to decide how to bury him. After making her way to Presbrey-Leland Studios, she was likely shown their catalog of memorials.³ In the catalog, they have instructions on how to select a memorial for a loved one, as well as many photos of potential mausoleum models one could chose from. Most of the models in the catalog were in Greek, Roman or Egyptian temple form. Presbrey-Leland inserted a paragraph on rough-cut stone, "avoid the so-called rock-face surface.

¹ _____, *Kliegl Bros: □ Universal Electric Stage Lighting Company □ Collectors Society*, <http://www.klieglbros.com/>

² Ibid.

³ _____, *The book of Presbrey-Leland Memorials*, New York, N.Y.: Presbrey-Leland Studios, 1932.

It is an artificial surface, neither artistic nor naturalistic. If the natural beauty of rugged unhewn rock appeals, it is better to use a field boulder and one untouched by the chisel. Mrs. Kliegl's choice of rough-cut red westerly granite for the exterior of her husband's mausoleum says a lot about her independence, or about her perception of her husband's. She bucked the trend with her style choice as well, as she chose the style of a small, gothicized chapel.

The Kliegl plot at Woodlawn Cemetery stands apart from the other plots; it is a circular shaped site, surrounded by a narrow paved walkway sitting prominently at the corner of Fern and Filbert Avenues⁴. In the Kliegl circle, no other mausoleums or graves have ever been installed. To further set the mausoleum apart, Mrs. Kliegl paid about \$1000 in 1927 to have the structure surrounded by plantings and evergreens, creating a private cemetery within a cemetery. This mausoleum was intended to be viewed from the front. Today, most of those plantings are gone; only two tall pines stand at the outer edges of the circular plan.

The barren circular site further emphasizes the differences between the Kliegl mausoleum and the others that surround it. Not unlike in the Presbrey-Leland catalog, most all of the other mausoleums are in shades of white and are variations on a Greek, Roman or Egyptian temple form. The Kliegl mausoleum has a simple gabled cottage or chapel form, with shallow buttress-like extrusions from the ends of the front and rear elevations of the structure. With the exception of a 4" edge around the window and door, the stone is very roughly cut, with variations of stone protrusion of 1 to 4 inches. The roof is created from three slabs of granite: the center ridgeline and two step-cut slabs, suggesting a tiled roof. Both the front double doors and the stained glass window in the rear elevation are in a narrow pointed arch gothicized form, lending this highly symmetrical structure some verticality. The granite stone cross atop the mausoleum is similar to one found atop a Lutheran Evangelical church in Mr. Kliegl's hometown of Bad Kissingen,

⁴ *Map of the Woodlawn Cemetery*, courtesy of the Woodlawn Cemetery.

Germany⁵; this serves to draw the eyes upward, perhaps an allusion to heaven. All of the stone is cut in thick ten inch slabs, and placed horizontally, long narrow side to side, upon each other. Though there are false vertical narrow joints carved into the stone to introduce marginal verticality, the effect of the slabs is one of horizontal stability. This structure sits firmly, heavily and symmetrically, on the ground.

The interior of the mausoleum is ordered and simple, but unlike its rough exterior, it is clad in highly polished pink Tennessee limestone. The wall slabs are carefully book-matched to give a very elegant look. The entombed (both Mr. and Mrs. Kliegl, who died twenty three years after her husband), lay side by side, perpendicular to the entrance, and at the rear. Atop their resting place is place a large slab of polished limestone. The Gothicized arch window at the rear, over the slab, portrays a monk holding what is presumed to be the baby Jesus. On the front of their resting places is place another large slab of limestone, with both Mr. & Mrs. Kliegl's names and death dates. In the center of the slab is a bronze relief of Mr. Kliegl. One can imagine that Mrs. Kliegl came to visit him over those 23 years, sitting on the limestone bench so thoughtfully placed in the foyer, and looking at his face, and reading the inscription carved into the stone below it: "Auf Wiedersehen" (until we see each other again). From inside, looking out the door, one sees a large mausoleum across the street. When the doors are closed, one can only see the trees around it. One wonders if Mrs. Kliegl imagined that view for her husband.

On the front of the Mausoleum, in the traditional old-fashioned method, only Mr. Kliegl's name is carved on the front. Above that is carved a circular form with three symbols inside: a cross, a heart and an anchor. In grave symbolism, the cross stands for faith, the anchor for hope, and the heart for love. This brings to mind the verse from 1 Corinthians 13: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." This mausoleum was a loving memorial of Mr. Kliegl by Mrs. Kliegl.

⁵ [http://wapedia.mobi/de/Erlöserkirche_\(Bad_Kissingen\)](http://wapedia.mobi/de/Erlöserkirche_(Bad_Kissingen))

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Appendix: Measured Drawings

