

Project 3: Documentation
Edward C. Schaefer Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery

To have a mausoleum in the Chestnut Hill are of Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx is in itself an indication of the deceased's social status, a display of wealth. Further research provides one with a more intricate portrait of the interred, in this case Edward Charles Schaefer (1850-1921), and of the circumstances of his commemoration in the form of a funerary monument (Fig. 1). Edward C. Schaefer was born in New York City in 1850, his father and uncle the owners of F. & M. Schaefer Brewing Company, which was, at the time of its close in 1976, New York's last operating brewery.ⁱ Thus, Mr. Schaefer was likely born into relative comfort and endowed with an entrepreneurial outlook, the resources and motivation to succeed. This idea is reinforced in the trajectory of his career: at the age of 19, Mr. Schaefer became an employee of Germania Bank, the company to which he would dedicate his entire career, ascending to the position of president from 1892 until his retirement at the age of 68.ⁱⁱ Under his tenure, the Germania Bank thrived, as evidenced by its expansion into a new building on The Bowery, designed by reputable New York architect Robert Maynicke (Fig. 2).ⁱⁱⁱ

Concerning his family life, Mr. Schaefer never had children, but nonetheless supported a full house at the time of his death.^{iv} His wife, Emma W. Schaefer, whom he married at the age of 53, was a widow and had one daughter from her previous marriage, Josephine Toerge. Josephine's two children, Edward and Frances, also lived in Mr. Schaefer's residence on East 88th Street.^v Several years after Mr. Schaefer's death, Emma

followed her daughter to Greenwich, CT, due to Josephine's marriage to a notable Swedish adventurer and ethnologist, Ivor Thord-Gray.^v

The facts of Edward C. Schaefer's biography do not necessarily elucidate the design aspects of his Egyptian style mausoleum, built in 1922. The choice to erect this type of tomb was made by Emma W. Schaefer, possibly with the help of her children. It is surely possible that Mr. Schaefer was an admirer of Ancient Egypt, as this was a somewhat popular cultural subject at the time. More likely is that Mrs. Schaefer was influenced to choose the style by a catalog published by Presbrey-Leland, the company that built the mausoleum.^{vii} Use of Egyptian forms and symbols in Western funerary architecture first became popular around the late 18th Century, after European-led excavations in Egypt shed light on the afterlife-centric aspects of the ancient culture. This led to the style's incorporation into American cemeteries, such as at Mount Auburn in Cambridge, MA (Fig. 3), and Grove Street in New Haven, CT.^{viii} A Presbrey-Leland Commemoration catalogue, published in 1929, presents the Egyptian style mausoleum as its first example of the company's ability to effectively translate ancient precedent into modern, relevant cemetery structures. The company displays an illustration (Fig. 4) of the Greco-Roman Temple of Edfu in Upper Egypt, proclaiming that it "typifies the solemnity and ponderous solidity of Egyptian architecture."^{ix}

The Edward C. Schaefer mausoleum land plot is irregular, with straight front and rear property lines, but curving sides. The building was constructed approximately twenty feet west of Chestnut Hill Avenue, and is set toward the rear property line, allowing a long procession to the front of the mausoleum, but leaving little space behind the structure (Fig. 5). Coupled with the distraction of much larger surrounding mausoleums, such as that of the Harkness Family, the great number of surrounding towering trees results in attention being drawn away from the Schaefer mausoleum. Interestingly, there is no evidence that

landscaping plans were ever made for the plot, so a grand, coordinated effect is not experienced in approaching the building.

The mausoleum's battered walls recall the Egyptian pylon form, referencing the prestige of an ancient culture and its monumental timelessness. This strength, along with the façade's precise symmetry, lends an air of confidence to the building, contributing to the visitor's belief in the resilience and eternity of the mausoleum. The austerity of the structure's massing is refined by many Egyptian symbols carved into the White Dummerston granite. Without an understanding of these symbols' meanings, the decoration serves little purpose other than to give the building a degree of ornament. The carvings (Fig. 6) are, however, significant, and enrich the meaning of the funerary architecture. Appearing throughout the façade are carved papyrus leaves and lotus flowers. Both of these plants appear often in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Papyrus, the quintessentially Egyptian plant of the Nile, symbolizes primeval creation, and was also associated with joy, triumph, and that which flourishes. Similarly, lotus flowers (Fig. 7) are found in the Nile Valley, and were known for retracting their flowers at night, and disappearing under the surface of the water.⁸ At daybreak, the flowers would rise up again, so it is easy to see how they symbolize rebirth and regeneration.

Upon entering the mausoleum, it is clear that one has entered into a sacred space. A somber atmosphere is created by an immediate drop in noise level, achieved through the great thickness of the walls, as well as lower light, due to there being only two openings in the structure. Curiously, the Egyptian theme that is constantly reinforced on the exterior of the mausoleum is nearly completely abandoned in its interior (Fig. 8), with the exception of bronze ankh charms, which resemble Christian crosses, flanking the names of the family members. This is the culmination of the building's drama, an intimate space where

mourners are able to contemplate their memories and recollections in silence. The heart of the building adheres to a Christian imagery, reflecting the core beliefs of the family. On the Tennessee Marble walls of the tombs are inscribed the three names of those interred: Edward C. Schaefer, Emma W. Schaefer, and Frances Thord-Gray.

ⁱ Schaefer Beer. "History." Schaefer Beer.

<http://www.schaefer-beer.com/history/default.aspx> (accessed October 9, 2013).

ⁱⁱ "Schaefer, Edward Charles. Financier, Man of Affairs." *American Biography: A New Cyclopedia*. 12 vols. New York: The American Historical Society, Inc. 1922.

http://books.google.com/books?id=vWoKAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summy_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed October 9, 2013).

ⁱⁱⁱ "Germania Bank's New Home," *New York Times*. December 29, 1898.

^{iv} *American Biography: A New Cyclopedia*. 245.

^v *Ibid.*

^{vi} USGenWeb Project, Fairfield County CT. "Gray Court, estate of Maj. Gen. Thord-Gray (Thord Ivor Hallstrom) of Belle Haven." Fairfield Photos.

http://www.ctgenweb.org/county/cofairfield/pages/fairfieldfotos/fffotos_038.htm (accessed October 9, 2013).

^{vii} *Commemoration: The Book of Presbrey-Leland Memorials*. New York: Presbrey-Leland, 1929.

^{viii} Curl, James Stevens. *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West*. Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2005. 303.

^{ix} *Commemoration: The Book of Presbrey-Leland Memorials*. 29.

^x Curl. "Glossary," 453.

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Images Appendix

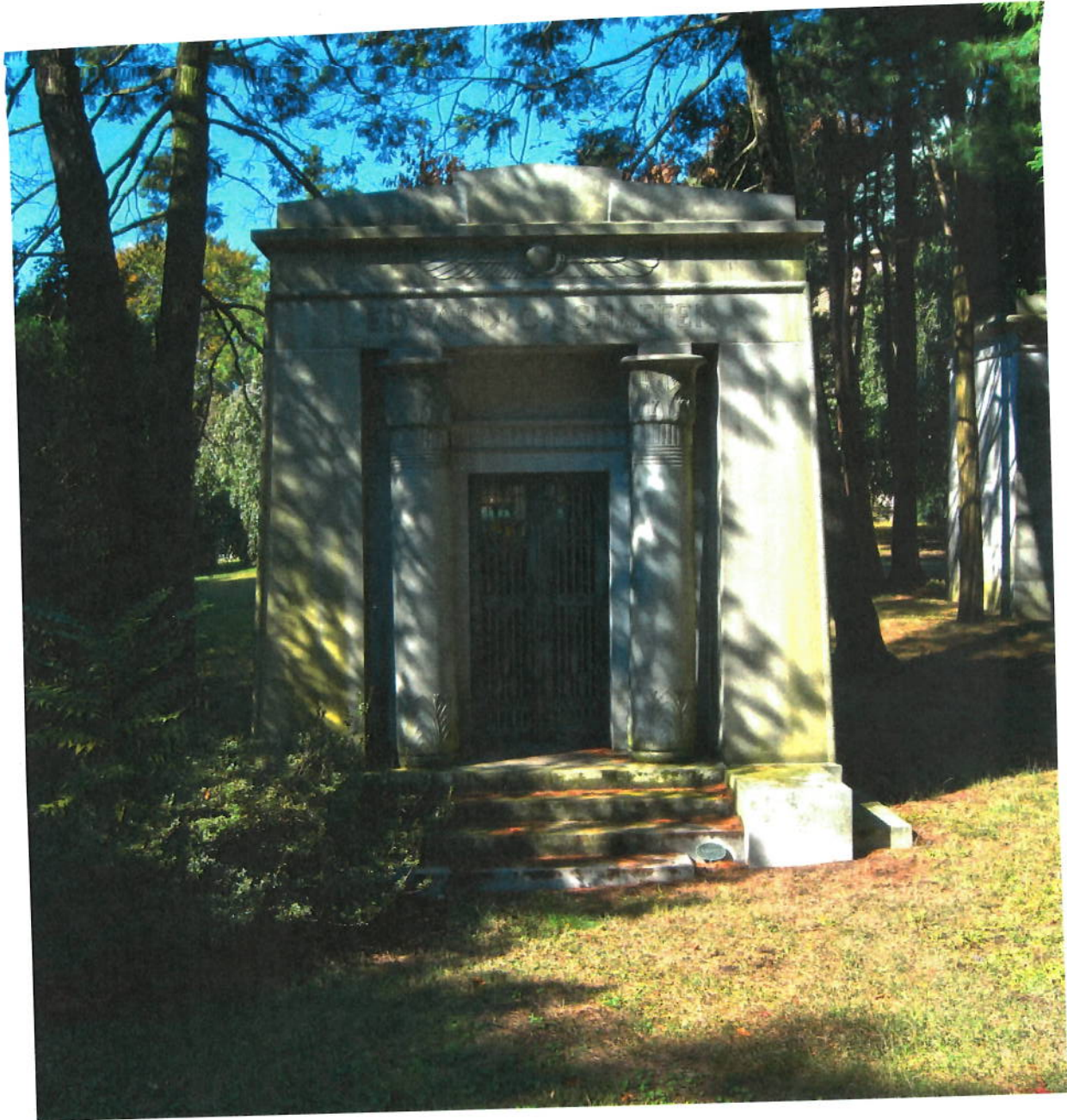


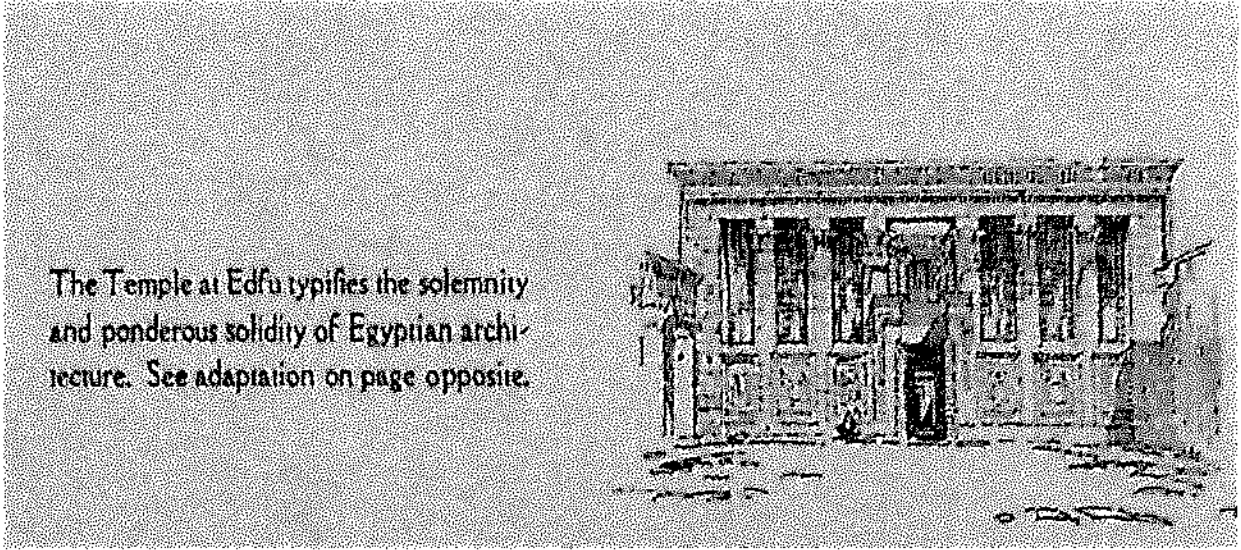
Figure 1- Edward C. Schaefer Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NYC



Figure 2- Germania Bank Building, 1905
Courtesy of Museum of the City of New York



Figure 3- Egyptian Gate, 1931, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, MA
Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art



The Temple at Edfu typifies the solemnity and ponderous solidity of Egyptian architecture. See adaptation on page opposite.

Figure 4- From Presbrey-Leland 1929 Catalog

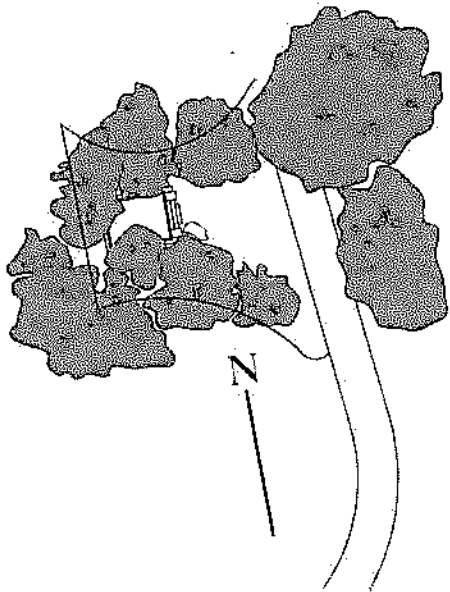


Figure 5- Site Plan

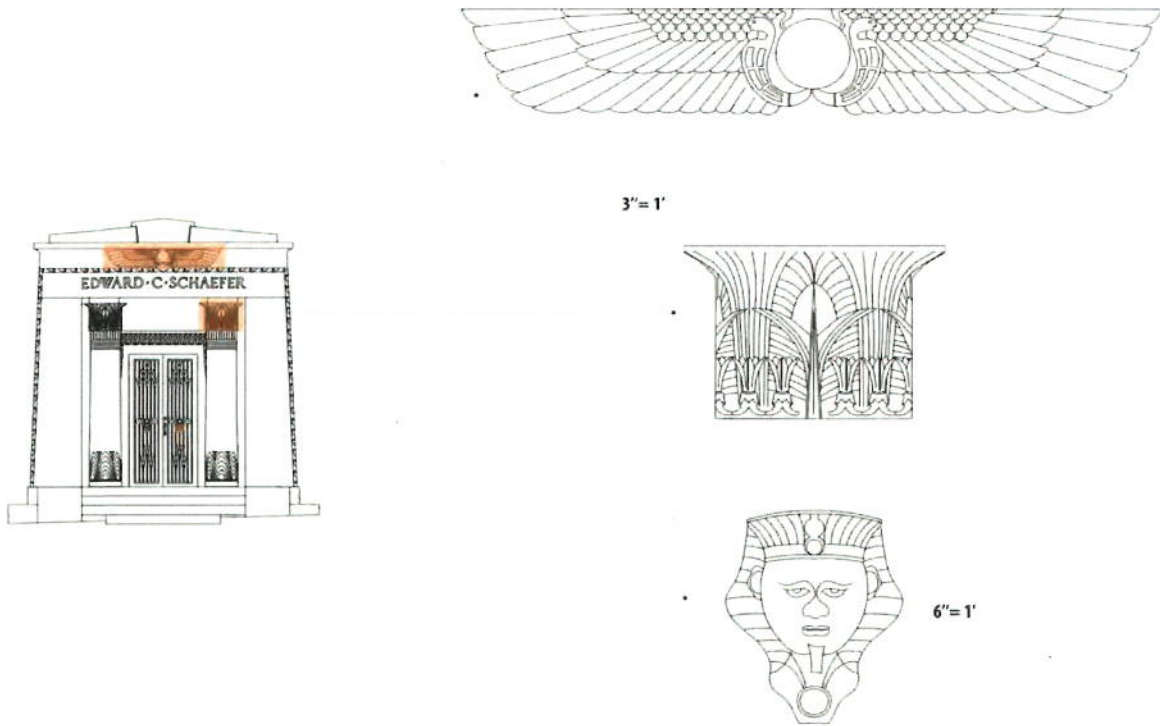


Figure 6- Details, Edward C. Schaefer Mausoleum



Figure 7- Alternating Lotus Flowers, Door Lintel, Edward C. Schaefer Mausoleum



Figure 8- Interior, Edward C. Schaefer Mausoleum